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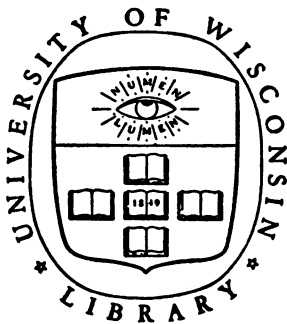
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SIR  
GAWAIN  
AT THE  
GRAIL  
CASTLE



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✓  
ARTHURIAN ROMANCES

Unrepresented in Malory's  
"Morte d'Arthur"

*No. VI.*

**Sir Gawain at the  
Grail Castle**

## ARTHURIAN ROMANCES

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C. M. Wells.





Sir Gawain  
at the  
Grail Castle.

Translated by  
Jessie L. Weston,  
With designs by  
Caroline Watts.

Published by David Nutt at the Sign of the Phoenix. 1903



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## Preface

THE stories contained in the present volume differ from those previously published in this series in that, unlike as they are, all three are variants of the same theme, the adventures of Sir Gawain in search of the Grail. Now to the average English reader, Sir Gawain, as a Grail Quester, is known only through the pages of Malory, where the worldly and irreverent character ascribed to him renders it a foregone conclusion that he will not achieve the Quest; and in truth he never even arrives at Castle Corbenic, much less beholds the talisman. Yet, and this is a point worth noting, it is Gawain who proposes the venture, and who is the first to volunteer. Such a curious discrepancy merits attention; and the student who will devote time and research to the subject will before very long discover, probably to his, or her, surprise, that no

knight of the whole cycle, save Perceval himself (and scarcely even he) is associated with the Grail under so many and varying conditions as is Sir Gawain.

Take the first story given in this volume, that drawn from the *Perceval*, it is found twice over in the section known as that by Gautier, and when Gawain meets his son he again recounts the experience. Thus in a small space we have three versions of the incident, and none of these three agree with each other in detail, though the main outline leaves no room for doubt that they are all versions of the same story. It is clear that the tale must have been well known and very popular for so many variants to have been current at the same moment.

In our second tale, that by Heinrich von dem Türlin, it is, as is implied, Gawain's second visit to the Grail castle. In the third tale, translated from the prose *Lancelot*, Gawain, though dismissed with contumely from the hall, has nevertheless been in close contact with the sacred vessel, and received from it, not hurt as does Lancelot in the *Queste*, but healing. Further, he and Bohort are the only two who behold

the marvels of Corbenic, and the latter does so on his second visit alone; on the first he does not sleep in the "Palace Adventurous," and it is only through the reproaches of a maiden, whom he subsequently meets, that he learns what he has missed. Nor does Lancelot on his visit to the castle dare the adventure.\*

In the prose *Perceval li Gallois*, or *Perlesvaus*, Gawain is privileged to behold the Grail, which is hidden from Lancelot on account of his sinful love for Guinevere, and he is also the winner of the second talisman of the story—the sword wherewith John the Baptist was beheaded.

When we further note that in the immense *Perceval* romance all the visits of the titular hero to the Grail castle, subsequent to that described by Chrétien, are marked by his attempts to resolder the broken sword, which is not found in the portion due to the earlier poet but makes its first appearance in our tale; and that the adventures of Bohort at Corbenic have been manifestly affected by those of Gawain at the Château Merveil, we are

\* The adventures of Bohort are given in an abridged form by Malory, book xi., chaps. 4 and 5.

driven to the conclusion that, if not the protagonist of the story, Gawain must, at an early period, have been widely and generally known as Grail Quester, and even as the Grail Winner.

Unfortunately the only version in which he now appears in the latter rôle, that of *Diu Crône*, though preserving features more wildly archaic than those of the other versions, has yet been manifestly contaminated by later developments—thus the Grail itself is in the form of a reliquary, and the King partakes alike of the wafer contained therein, and of the blood which drops from the Lance—a feature I have found nowhere else, and the significance of which will be commented upon in the notes.

Widely as our three versions differ they all possess certain features in common, and No. 3, apart as it stands from the others in style and content, yet shows traces of their influence. Indeed it is this very element of likeness in unlikeness which has largely influenced the choice of these stories. Not only are they interesting as showing the chief hero of early Arthurian tradition in an unfamiliar light, but they are to the student of Arthurian literature

deeply instructive as examples of the evolution which that literature has undergone. I have carefully chosen, in each instance where a choice was possible (No. 2 of course exists only in one form), the version most representative of the tale. Thus No. 1 is taken from the unique *Perceval* MS. 12,576 of the *Bib. Nat.*, the only extant MS., so far as we know, which contains the continuation by Gerbert. It is a thirteenth-century text, and, as careful collation has shown me, a much better text than that of 794, also of the thirteenth century. The version at the root of both is identical, but 12,576 follows it more closely. The character of this MS. is unmistakable; it is a minstrel's version, a text used by one who recites his verses to a knightly audience. We find the constantly recurring formula of address—"Seignurs, ensi avons apris"—they have heard this tale or that, now he will pass to another—all of which is dropped in 794; and the character of the recital, simple, direct, picturesque, is entirely in accord. We are still at a period when the Arthurian story was scarcely literary; works of literature there were, and those of high excellence,

but side by side with these subsisted the material out of which they had been formed, versions popular in the fullest sense of the word, and popular not only among the folk. Even in the castles of those nobles for whom the finished literary work had been composed the travelling minstrel, whose "stock-in-trade" was the folk-tale in its earlier, shorter form, found a ready welcome. The tales thus told, though strung on the thread of some popular hero's individuality, still preserved their independent form; the beginning and ending of each tale, or group of tales (as the Carados group), is marked by some such formula as we have noted above, and the reciter often knew and used more than one version—a fact that should not surprise us if we once grasp the true character of these "minstrel" MSS., and realise that they would not, and could not, be recited at once, but must have formed the entertainment of many evenings. Such a collection as that which we call the "Gautier" continuation to the *Perceval*, is in truth a veritable storehouse of minstrel themes, and it is a mistake to treat it as a deliberate literary composition.



The version given as No. 2, though probably not later in actual date of transcription, Heinrich von dem Türlin living in the first half of the thirteenth century, is of another character; we still have the folk-lore themes, and the popular folk-tale, but the process of converting these into a literary composition has gone further. The stories are no longer complete and coherent; though obviously distinct in origin, they run one into the other in a manner which makes it difficult to say exactly where one ended and the other began. The stories in the *Perceval* MSS. are easily separated from their context; in the poem of *Diu Crône*, full of value and interest as it is to the student, it is by no means easy to give form and shape to the special adventure we desire to extract, so that while remaining a faithful translation of the original it shall yet be complete in itself.

Nor does Heinrich refer freely to his sources; we miss the unstudied touches which mark the earlier versions—the reference, as it were accidentally, to “the book,” “the tale,” to “him of Poitiers,” “him of Loudon”—all of which show that the reciter was in no wise minded to

claim for himself the credit of original invention. The fact that the stories told *are* old stories, that they have been told hundreds of times before, is allowed to drop out of sight, and the references, if any, are to some recognised literary authority, such as Chrétien or Wolfram, whose reputation is already sufficiently established to ensure acceptance for any composition masquerading under his name. The stories claim a hearing, not as being oft-told tales, but as being connected with a more or less well-known personality — we are a long way on the road of literary development.

With No. 3 we realise that the process is complete. The source of this version is the fourteenth century MS. 123 of the *Bib. Nat.* I selected this from among the large number of *Lancelot* MSS. because, of all that I had read, its version, while conforming strictly to the story, appeared to me the most literary and fluent. The compiler had evidently a clear idea of form and of the unities; Lancelot is his hero, and whenever he can he passes lightly over the adventures of other knights, keeping the main thread of his story clear and intact. So important a section of the

## Preface

romance as that dealing with Gawain's adventure at the Grail castle could not, however, be abridged, and we have here the advantage of the writer's excellent style without any loss of detail. I carefully collated the translation with MS. 751, one of the oldest and fullest texts, and have added a few touches omitted in the later version. They were unimportant in themselves, but helped to fill in the picture. Here we realise exactly the kind of MS. which must have lain before Malory; certain of the phrases, literally translated, read almost like extracts from the old knight's work. We note, for instance, the frequently recurring "Ha! Sir Knight," which gives such life to Malory's prose. But no longer do we hear any question of this or that source; old themes there are in the background, but those themes have been so completely worked over and woven into the fabric that only with difficulty can they be disentangled. To all appearance we are meant to accept the story as an original story, the work of the man, whoever he may be, who has compiled it. But if he does not name his sources, neither does he name himself; the art of literary craftsmanship is so far

complete that the writer has learned to sink himself in his work. He has alike outgrown the professional pride of the minstrel, who demands acceptance for his stories on the ground of their antiquity, and the naïve self-complacency of the earlier writers—Chrétien, Wolfram, or Heinrich—who, conscious of gifts superior to those of the professional reciter, desire to win credit for their work. The Arthurian “motif” has reached the ultimate goal of its evolution, it has become the inspiring subject of French prose, and excellent prose. That much of the subtle glamour and pervasive charm of the themes has vanished in the process of transformation from folk-tale to classical literature will, I think, be the verdict of most readers.

PARIS,

*July 1903.*

# I. The Unknown Knight

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Now it came to pass that the tale went about throughout the land of Britain how that King Arthur had achieved the emprise he had laid upon him for the sake of that good knight, Sir Giffet, who was held in dur-  
ance by the folk of the Castle Orguellous. For in sooth he had set him free, and would return in all haste to his own land by a set day.

Then the Queen bade carry her pavilion, and many another, to the glade of the Crossways, and said she would go thither to disport herself, nor would she in anywise depart thence till she had there kept tryst with her lord the King. With her went counts and barons enow; many a tent, many a bower, many a pavilion, did they cause to be set up in that glade, for there would they sojourn, and await as was fitting the coming of their lord. At the meeting of the Crossways was the royal tent set up where the Queen, with many a valiant knight, would keep her tryst with the King.

'Twas a fair sojourning in the green-wood, and the huntsmen took many a wild beast, there was no lack of such in the thickets !

As they abode there, even as I tell ye, it fell out on a Tuesday that 'twas a wondrous fair eventide. The Queen sat at chess with King Urien, 'twas the game she best loved, and around, to watch the play, sat Sir Gawain and many another good knight. Even as twilight fell they saw an armed knight come riding upon a gallant steed, who passed before them, and spake word to none. The Queen was vexed thereat, and spake saying, "That knight holdeth me in small account, for he looked not on me nor proffered me greeting. I were fain to know his name, and in sooth to know himself." She spake to Kay, the seneschal, "Kay, mount quickly, and go, bring him hither to me."

"Right willingly, lady"—and with that the seneschal went to arm himself, for know that ever, an he could, he would do the commandment of the Queen. He did off his rich surcoat, furred with ermine, and armed himself in haste, and mounted, riding in pursuit swiftly, as one who is not



well assured. Such haste did he make that he came up with him whom he followed, and cried, "Vassal, ye did great folly in that ye rode past the pavilion without praying leave of the Queen and her folk, turn about quickly!"

The knight answered, "So may God help me, I withheld not my greeting through pride, but never man rode on more urgent quest than that on which I ride, nor may I turn me again."

And Kay quoth, "So may God help me, but ye speak vainly, an ye turn not again, vassal, I will slay your steed!"

The knight made answer, in fashion of a man much troubled, "That would hinder me much, for afoot I may not go, nor may any so come thither; fair Sir, it behoves me to ride far ere this night be ended, say ye to the Queen that so surely as I return will I gladly speak with her, and yield me to her mercy in that I have failed to obey her now."

Kay took no heed of his words, but rode swiftly toward him, as if to joust; and even as the knight saw him coming he spurred his steed, and smote him so fiercely that Kay bent backward over his saddle-

bow, and fell to the ground, feet in air, but little more an he had been slain, so hardly did he fall! The knight rode to Kay's steed, took it by the bridle, and went his way.

Then Kay turned him about, sore ashamed, and took his way to the tents afoot. A good hundred were they who at heart were right joyful for his shaming, but durst speak no word openly.

Forthwith he began to tell them the greatest lies, such as none other would have bethought him of—"Lady," quoth he, "'tis a proud and ribald knight, never man heard greater folly than that which he hath spoken of you!"

Sir Gawain made answer, "Sir Kay, by all the saints that be, never did valiant knight miscall my lady! Say ye not so, but let the knight be, an he hath taken thy steed 'tis no cause that ye should talk foolishly, that were villainy indeed!"

Quoth the Queen, "Fair nephew, go ye, and bring the knight again."

"Right willingly, lady," quoth Sir Gawain.

Then they brought unto him his steed, and he mounted thereon, all unarmed as

he was, clad in a purple mantle, and bearing in his hand a painted wand. He followed the knight swiftly, nor would spare haste; 'twas wellnigh nightfall when he came up with him. Then he greeted him fairly, and the knight drew rein courteously when he heard Sir Gawain speak.

He said, "Sir, I pray ye, and the Queen to whom all Britain and Ireland do belong giveth command, that ye come straight-way unto her, so shall ye do well and courteously."

The knight made answer, "Sir, so God help me, that may I not do; but tell me I pray ye, and hide it not, how do men call ye?"

"Sir," saith he, "I am called Gawain."

"Ha, Sir, be ye right certain, that by Saint Peter of Rome, an I might turn again for any man I would do so more gladly for ye than for any other! But I have taken upon me a matter that demandeth haste, nor may I turn back for any. I wot not what I may tell ye further, save that none but I may achieve the quest; nevertheless I deem well ye might achieve it, yet should ye have great pain and travail therewith."

“Sir,” saith Sir Gawain, “I pray ye frankly, with joined hands, that ye turn again with me, and come unto the Queen, since for a proud and ribald knight, felon and outrageous, doth the seneschal miscall ye, he who came to ye but now; evilly did he slander ye in the Queen’s bower, in the hearing of many barons, yet there were those who laid the blame on him.”

Quoth the knight, “What care I for Kay, or for any words that he may speak? But for you, right dear Sir, will I do whatsoever may please ye; yet this my quest must perforce be delayed, an ye do it not for me.”

Then Sir Gawain made answer to him, who was in no wise discourteous, despite Kay’s words, “Sir, I thank ye right heartily, and loyally do I here make covenant that I will aid ye in any way I may, were I the sole knight in the world. By Christ, Who seeth all, an’ I rightly acquit me of this errand ye shall have no damage therefrom, so God preserve mine honour!”

The knight spake forthwith, “Great trust and great assurance, fair Sir, have I in your company; see ye, I am ready to go whithersoever ye shall lead me.”

With that they turned them about; Kay's charger, methinks, they let stray as it would, nor deigned to lead it with them.

Thus they came again swiftly, but I tell ye verily and of a truth, that even as they drew nigh unto the tents, ere they had well passed the first, the knight uttered a great plaint suddenly, and cried with a loud voice, "Ha, Sir Gawain! I am a dead man—forsooth 'tis a shame and a dishonour that I be slain in your safe-conduct! An God will I think me ye will do that which ye have covenanted with me. But now straightway take this mine armour, and arm yourself therewith, and mount this my steed, which will carry ye surely, and without fail, on the great quest which I had thought to achieve."

Then he gave forth a great cry, "Lord God, wherefore have they slain me? For never had I done them harm!"

Sir Gawain looked upon him, marvelling greatly that he thus made plaint, for naught had he seen or heard, and he knew not that any had smitten him. And as he looked, lo! he saw him fall forward upon the neck of his charger, and therewith the blood gushed forth, for he was smitten through

the body with the cast of a javelin, so that the iron thereof might be seen.

Quoth Sir Gawain, weeping, "Sir ! Sir ! heavily hath he shamed me who hath thus smitten ye !"

But the knight fell dead, and spake never word more; nor might any ask his name, whose man he was, nor whence he came, nor whither he went. Then there came together a great folk, who lamented him sorely, but they knew not who had slain him, nor whether 'twere well or ill done. Yet many put the blame on Kay, and said surely Kay had slain him; but he denied it straitly, and made complaint that they so charged him.

Sir Gawain waxed red with wrath and anger, and thrust him from him so that he staggered and had well nigh fallen; but the knights set themselves 'twixt the twain; of a sooth, had they not separated them the one from the other, Sir Gawain had done him a mischief. He spake in great anger, in the hearing of all, "Yet will I make ye pay dearly for his death, proven traitor that ye be ! For sure and certain am I that ye slew him with your own hand." Kay hid himself as quickly as might be among the

press, and made no answer to that which he heard him speak.

Sir Gawain bade them lay the body of the knight upon his shield, and bear it thus unto the Queen's pavilion; weeping, he bowed him low, and said, "Lady, see here the knight whom ye bade me bring into your presence; he came without word of refusal, great or small. Now is he dead in your safe-conduct, and thereby are ye dishonoured in the sight of all. Behold his corpse! 'Tis great pity, for 'twas a very wise and courteous knight. And I, I think me, am shamed thereby, for never in the sight or hearing of man did such dishonour befall any as to-day hath befallen me, since it seemeth that 'twas I betrayed him to his death: that I tell ye of a truth!"

With that he bade them disarm the body, and the knights and the barons looked upon the dead knight, and made lamentation, beholding the fashion of the man, and said, "Christ! Where was he born, this man who was so fair to look upon?" Nor might any of them know him, nor the land from whence he came.

Wherefore should I make a long tale thereof? Sir Gawain straightway took

the harness of the slain knight, and therewith did he arm himself, and he mounted the steed which he aforetime bestrode, who now lay dead within the pavilion. The Queen, who wept for anger and bitter sorrow, said unto him, "Fair nephew, what would ye do? Hide naught from me, but tell me, I pray ye." Sir Gawain made answer, "Certes, lady, I may not tell ye, in that I scarce know myself, but this much may I say in all truth, that even should I die therein I must needs achieve the quest whereto I made covenant with this knight. I know naught that I may tell ye aforehand, save that this steed will surely carry me the road that it behoves me to travel: but whither I know not, nor to what land I know not, nor know I what may be the quest which I have taken upon me. Lady, I pray ye, make inquest into the death of this knight, that I may know the truth thereof at my returning, for never shall I be truly joyful till that I have avenged him."

With that Sir Gawain took leave, and would depart, nor would he remain the night for any prayer, though barons and knights besought him straitly; greatly did



they lament for the good nephew of their lord the King, for they knew not, nor might think of, the land whither he was bound. Thus Sir Gawain departed from among them, and the stranger knight lay dead in their midst.

Now as the writing doth us to wit the night was black, and of great darkness, for long time it thundered, and it rained, and there was so mighty a wind that the trees were split asunder. So swift and so oft were the lightning flashes that it was a marvel that gentle knight Sir Gawain died not ere the morning ; but this I tell ye, that never was he in so strait a place but he was saved through his great loyalty, and his true courtesy, and this very night that we now tell of did God, Who lieth not, protect him. Know ye then verily, that throughout the night the good knight rode, even as the steed would carry him, until he came unto a great and fair chapel, that stood at a crossways in the midst of the forest. Since that he was sore pressed for the thunder and the lightning, that beset him as it were on every side, Sir Gawain made for the door, and found it open, and saw within where the altar stood all bare,

with neither cloth nor covering thereon, but a great candlestick, wrought of gold, that stood alone, and therein a tall taper that burned clearly, and shed a great light around. When the knight beheld this he bethought him that he would enter therein, and rest awhile, till that the weather was somewhat cleared, and the great wind abated. Thus he passed the doorway, ahorse as he was, and looked round about, up and down, to right and to left, and was ware of a window, right there behind the altar, and even as he looked, lo! a hand black and hideous, naught so marvellous had he beheld afore, came through the window, and took the taper, and extinguished the flame. With that came a voice that made lament, so loud and so dire, that it seemed as if the chapel itself rocked therefrom. This so affrighted the steed that it made a spring, and Sir Gawain was wellnigh thrown to earth. Then did he raise his hand and signed him with the sign of the cross, and gat him forth from the chapel. With that the storm abated and the great wind was stayed so that thereafter it blew not nor rained a drop, but the night became clear and calm. Sir Gawain

rode on his way swiftly, nor made delay, but many a time was he afear'd for the marvels he had seen, yet of them durst no man speak for dread of wrath, for in sooth they appertain unto the high secrets of the Grail, and he bringeth on himself toil and tribulation who undertaketh to recount them, save in that place which is right and fitting. But I tell ye of a truth that that good knight rode all night nor drew bridle, in sorrow, in wrath, and in dread, till that the morn came and he saw the day dawn.

Sir Gawain looked around him on the land and marvelled much, for in that one night had he outridden Britain and all that country, and entered within a great forest which endured even from the morning unto the setting of the sun. Then did he issue forth on to a plain, and beheld the sea, and thither did the good steed bear him at a swift pace. Sir Gawain had held vigil through the night and journeyed far through the day, wind and rain had beaten upon him, neither had he eaten or drunk, so that he was marvellous weary and rode right heavily. Such desire of sleep came upon him that scarce might he sit upright. The good steed knew that well and

dragged at the bridle, and Sir Gawain slackened his hand somewhat, and let it go as it willed.

Thus did it bear him till at nightfall he came unto the seashore, nor might he ride further. With that was Sir Gawain troubled in mind and somewhat wroth, but the good steed turned towards a path which he beheld afar off and stayed not till he came to the entering in thereof. On either side the way was planted with cypress, pine, and laurel; 'twas so narrow that the branches met overhead, and Sir Gawain must needs bend him low. Then he looked before him and saw afar off a light as it were of a kindled fire. Thither would the steed carry him, but it might scarce do so for the torment of the sea, which dashed against the pathway as it would wash it away and tear up the trees, which were thrown against each other, groaning for the violence of the wind. Sore afraid, and that of good reason, was Sir Gawain, and he said within himself that he would wait even unto the dawning ere he would adventure himself therein. But I tell ye truly that the good steed reared and strained at the bridle, and made such ado that the knight

might in no wise hold it, but the rein was wrenched from his hand, and the horse took the bit in its teeth and entered the pathway, whether its rider would or no. Then the good knight bade it go at its will, and yielded the rein, yea, and spurred it on, so that with great bounds, many and oft, it went swiftly on its way.

Thus they rode even until midnight, but came not unto the light, but went ever on the causeway, and held it until they came unto a great hall, high, and long, and wide. In the durance of a bowshot came a marvellous great folk (so I tell ye verily), and among them must Sir Gawain dismount; with great honour was he received, and all spake saying, "Fair Sir, blessed and honoured be your coming, for long time have we desired it."

Thus they led their guest within, even unto the fire, and when they had disarmed him a squire brought unto him a furred mantle, and wrapped it around him, and he sat him down beside the fire. And it came to pass after a while, as they beheld his countenance, the folk began to marvel greatly, and to take counsel the one with the other, saying, "Lord, what may this

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be? 'Tis not he whom we awaited!" How shall I tell ye? Swiftly, in the closing of an eye, did all that great folk vanish, so that Sir Gawain might see them no more.

At this that gentle knight marvelled much, and greatly was he troubled for that not one of the folk remained behind. Angry was he and wroth in that they had so left him alone, and moreover he was troubled in that he had seen them take counsel together. Nor should any man marvel if he were afeard or in doubt. He looked adown the hall, as one ill at ease, and in no wise assured, and there in the midst he beheld a bier, wondrous long, and so soon as Sir Gawain saw it he raised his hand and made the sign of the cross, for know ye that he misdoubted him.

Now he beheld and saw that on the bier there lay a dead body, and above it was spread for honour a fair red samite, with cross of gold work, which covered the bier all round about. At the four corners stood four great tapers that burned in four fair candlesticks, worth a great treasure, at the least would they have weighed a hundred golden marks; and on each candlestick hung a censer of fine gold, richly wrought,

wherein were spices which gave forth a most sweet smell. I tell ye truly that never man smelt a sweeter odour. On the samite of which I tell ye was the half, and no more, of a sword broken midway below the hilt, as the writing telleth, it lay above and upon the breast of the dead.

Sir Gawain knit his brows, for wroth was he, and in dread, in that he was there alone : so troubled was he, so ill pleased and misdoubtful, that he knew not what it behoved him to do, for much he misliked the bier and the dead knight that lay thereon.

As he stood thus he raised his eyes and beheld a wondrous rich cross of silver, set about with precious stones of manifold virtue, borne by a tall clerk, who had much ado to carry it : he was vested in an alb and tunicle of a rare stuff of Constanti-nople. After him there came a great procession of canons, robed in silken copes, who stayed them around the bier, and began with a loud voice to chant the Vigil of the dead. As they chanted four clerks censured the bier with the censers that hung upon the golden candlesticks.

When they had ended the service they turned them again whence they came, and

lo ! the hall was once more filled with folk, and I tell ye verily that since the hour ye were born never might ye hear such wailing and lamentation as arose there above the dead. Sir Gawain commended him unto God, that He would keep him from harm, and made good countenance and sat him down again, for he had stood awhile, covering his eyes with his hand as he were in thought.

Anon he heard a great tumult that drew nigh unto him, and he lifted his head and beheld the great folk that he saw at the first, and he saw how they held cloths and napkins, whiter than lilies or than snow, and spread them upon the daÿs. With that there came forth from a chamber a knight, tall and strong of limb, one who might well be a great man and a wise : nor was he of great age, yet was he somewhat bald. He was nobly vested, and bare a sceptre in his hand, and on his head a crown wrought of fine red gold : nor was there in Christendom a fairer man, nor a more courteous.

The King bade them bring water and he washed, and bade Sir Gawain do likewise ; then he took him by the hand gently and seated him beside him at meat,



even as a friend, and strove much to do him honour. When all were seated, on every da's bread was set, 'twas the rich Grail that served them, yet no hand held it, but it served them right well, and came and went swiftly amid the knights. But know ye 'twas the butlers who served the wine, in cups of silver and fine gold, and the Grail went and came again the while, though none might know who held it. Full seven courses had those good knights, well and richly did the Grail serve them, on every da's so soon as the one meat was lifted was the other set, all in great dishes of silver—most fair and fitting was the service. Sir Gawain gazed and greatly marvelled, for now was the Grail here and anon was it there, and he knew not what to make of its coming and going, and the fashion of their service.

When they had eaten at leisure the King bade take away the tables, and this I tell ye of a truth that scarce had he spoken the word when the hall was left empty, and the da's void, for all had departed, and the King himself first of all.

Think ye that Sir Gawain was in no wise troubled when he found himself thus

left alone? I tell ye he was much in doubt and right wrathful that he should be in such case. He commended himself humbly unto God, praying that He would guard him from mischance, sorrow, and enchantment, even as He had power to do. Right suddenly he beheld there a lance, the blade of which was white as snow, 'twas fixed upright at the head of the master-daßs, in a rich vessel of silver, and before it burned two tapers which shed a bright light around. From the point of the lance issued a stream of blood, which ran down into the vessel, even unto the brim rose the drops of blood, which fell not save into the silver cup. Yet might it not be filled for a fair mouth-piece, wrought of a verdant emerald, through which the blood fell into a channel of gold, which by great wisdom and artifice ran forth without the hall, but Gawain might not see whither it led. Then he marvelled greatly within himself, thinking that never had he seen so great a wonder as this lance, which was of wood and yet bled without stanching. And as he mused thus he heard the door of a chamber open, and he saw come forth the lord of the castle, holding in his hand a sword—and know verily that

'twas none other than the sword of the knight of whom I have told ye afore, he who was slain before the pavilion—and the King spake forthwith to Sir Gawain, bidding him arise from his seat, and he led him by the hand even unto the bier, weeping bitterly for the corpse that lay thereon.

Now hearken to that which the King spake: "Great is the loss that ye lie thus, 'tis even the destruction of kingdoms: God grant that ye be avenged so that the folk be once more joyful, and the land re-peopled, which by ye and by this sword are wasted and made void." With that he drew the sword, and lo! 'twas broken, so that he held but the half thereof. Weeping for bitter sorrow he gave it unto Sir Gawain, and that good knight laid hold on it, the half that was lacking lay on the corpse of the dead knight. The King took it in his hand, and spake these words, neither less nor more: "Fair Sir, and gentle knight, an' God will this sword shall by ye be re-soldered; put ye now the two pieces together so that the one steel shall cleave to the other, so shall ye know verily and without doubt that ye shall be held the best knight in the world so long as it may

endure." Then did Sir Gawain take the pieces and set them each to the other, but in no wise might he achieve that the steel should hold together, and the brand be resoldered.

Then was the King sore vexed, and he laid the one half again lightly above the breast of the dead knight, even as it had lain afore, and the other half he set in the scabbard, but know ye that he was ill-pleased that the twain might not come together. He bare the sword in one hand and with the other he laid hold on Sir Gawain, and led him into a chamber where he found knights enow, and a great gathering of other folk. They sat themselves down on a costly silken cloth, spread before a couch, and the King spake gently: "Fair sweet friend, take not amiss that which I tell ye, the quest on which ye came hither may not be achieved by thee; but an God so advance your prowess that He grant your return hither, then may ye perchance achieve it, and then may ye resolder the sword. For know of a truth that none save he who maketh the sword whole again may fulfil the quest. Sir knight, he who had undertaken the emprise hath remained in your

country, I know not what hath delayed him, but long have we awaited his coming. Well I know that 'twas of your great hardiness that ye came hither ; and would ye ask any treasure that we have in this land, certes, and of good will shall it be given ye. None here will do ye a mischief, and of the marvels ye have beheld ask at your pleasure, fair Sir, and we will tell ye the truth and lie not."

Now Sir Gawain had watched through the foregoing night, and ridden far, and had much travail, and great was his desire of slumber, yet greater was his will to hear of the marvels of the castle, thus did he force himself to be wakeful, and asked of that of which he was most in doubt : "Sire," he said, "but now I saw within the hall a lance that bled right freely, now would I pray and require of ye that ye tell me the truth thereof. Whence cometh the blood that floweth in such plenty from the point of the blade ? And of the knight who lieth there dead upon the bier ; and the broken sword, how it may be resoldered, and how the slain may be avenged—of all that do I ask, for an it vex ye not I would fain know the truth thereof."

“Ye shall know it, fair friend, since ye have asked me, straightway and with no tarrying, otherwise durst no man tell ye. But now shall it in no wise be hidden from ye, and ye shall know all that ye have asked. Now would I tell ye first and at the beginning of the Lance, the great loss and the great grief that came therefrom, and the great honour, even as God, through Whom we are healed and saved, hath willed and established it. Know ye verily 'tis that Lance with which the Son of God was smitten through the side, even unto the heart, in the day that He hung upon the Cross. Longinus was the name of him who smote the blow, but afterwards did he receive mercy even unto the salvation of his soul, and he rests in peace. But all the days since hath that Lance bled, and ever shall it bleed until the Day of Doom, nor may it be removed from that place where now it standeth, for 'tis ordained of God that it remain there until He come again to judge the quick and the dead. Fair Sir, I think me that they who hung Christ on the Cross, and nailed Him there, and smote Him, shall be sore afraid when they shall see Our Lord bleed as freshly as on that day,

they shall be in great torment, but we shall depart into joy, for that blood shall be our ransom. The great joy that we won by that stroke, fair Sir, may I not tell ye, but by the other are we so bereft that we have lost all. I speak of the stroke given by this sword, in an ill hour was it fashioned and tempered, never did sword strike so sore a blow, for it hath sent to destruction many a duke, many a prince, many a baron, many a noble dame, many a fair maiden and gentle demoiselle. Ye shall have heard tell of the great destruction through which we came hither, how that the kingdom or Logres was destroyed, and the country laid waste by the stroke of this sword; nor would I hide from ye who he was who lost his life, nor who he was who smote him; such marvel ye never heard."

With that he began to weep, and weeping, to tell the tale the truth whereof he knew right well, but even as he would begin he saw that Sir Gawain slept, nor would he waken him, but ceased speaking and left him to his slumber. And I tell ye truly that Sir Gawain slept through the night, and wakened not till the morning, when he found himself on a lofty cliff

beside the sea, and nigh at hand, on a rock, were his arms and his steed.

Strangely did he marvel in that he found himself there, and saw neither house nor castle, neither hall nor keep; and he be-thought him 'twere an ill sojourning there, so he did on his armour and mounted in haste—he knew well that he was shamed in that he had fallen asleep, for by slumber had he lost hearing of the wonders he had seen, and for that was he grieved at heart.

“Ha! God,” quoth he, “so gently did that gracious King, the brave, the wise, the courteous, tell unto me the secret of the great marvels I beheld! Surely do I repent me in that I fell asleep.” Then he said unto himself that he would so strive in travail of arms that an it might be he would again find that court, and ask once more concerning the service of the Grail, which he had seen the even before in that goodly hall. “Never,” quoth he, “will I return again to Britain till I have done such deeds of arms as may pertain thereto.” Then he set spur to his horse, and rode thence swiftly, and never might one behold a land so fairly garnished with wood, with water, and with fair pastures. Yet 'twas the Waste



Kingdom, but at midnight had God made it even as he saw it ; for so soon as Sir Gawain asked of the Lance, wherefore it bled thus freshly the waters flowed again through their channels, and all the woods were turned to verdure. So was the land in part repeopled, but more it might not be, since he had asked no more.

All the folk whom he beheld blessed him as he passed them by, and cried with one voice upon him : “ Sir knight, thou hast slain and betrayed us ! Yet great ease hast thou given to us of a truth, and for that are we glad and joyful ; and yet must we needs be wroth with thee. Certes, greatly should we hate thee, in that thou didst not ask concerning the Grail and the service thereof. None may tell the joy that should have followed on thine asking—thus it behoveth us to be sad and wrathful.” In such fashion spake all whom he met, yet know, that of great love they did it.

Know ye that Sir Gawain rode through many lands, and suffered much travail of arms, for many a long day ere he bethought him to return to Britain. Of the combats that beset him, and the marvels he beheld 'tis not fitting that I tell more ; nor will I

speak further of him who was slain at the pavilion, who he was, and whence he came, for here doth the tale pass to another matter, even to tell of Guiglain, Sir Gawain's son, and the first deeds which he wrought.

## II. The Achieving of the Quest





LONG and weary were the journeyings that good knight, Sir Gawain, made in search of the Grail; for he came even to a land wherein from the waxing to the waning of the moon there lacked not adventures stiff and stern. Yet his manhood stood him in good stead at need, otherwise had the toil and the strife weakened him overmuch. How-soe'er it vexed him sorely. Yet the road led him at the last to a rich and goodly land, so well tilled that naught was lacking of the fruits of the earth, corn, and vines, and fair trees, all whereby man might live grew freely on either hand. That was right pleasing to Sir Gawain, who was worn with travel, for the land was like unto a garden, green, and in nowise bare, and of right sweet odour; it might well be held for an earthly Paradise, since 'twas full of all delights that heart of man might desire.

But ere ever he came within its borders a strange adventure befell him, for he saw

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a fiery sword, the breadth whereof he might not measure, which kept the entry to a fastness, within which stood a dwelling, cunningly builded, but the walls whereof were clear and transparent as glass; naught that passed therein might be held secret but 'twould have been seen without. I wot not how it chanced, but 'twas void and bare, and Sir Gawain deemed it strange and of ill omen; I think me well 'twas of ill, for 'twas a wild land, but therewith he left it behind him.

So the knight journeyed through that fair country, where he found all that heart desired, or that was needful to the body, so that his strength came again unto him, and he was wholly recovered of the pains which he had endured. And when he had ridden a twelve days' journey through the woodland he came again to an open country, and there he did meet with his comrades, Sir Lancelot and Sir Calogreant, whereat he was greatly rejoiced. The twain had wandered far astray, and save for their arms he might scarce have known them. He found them sleeping under a tree, whither his road led him, and for very joy he wakened them. Then they greeted each

other gladly, and told each to the other the toils and the troubles that had befallen them as they rode singly or in company on their quest.

No longer might they abide there, for it drew towards nightfall; and as they went their way they beheld and saw how on the same track a squire spurred swiftly towards them, nor would he slacken his pace ere they met; right friendly was his mien as he bade Sir Gawain and his comrades be welcome to God, and to his lord, and to himself, in sooth he spoke truly and in no mockery, for good token he gave thereafter of his truth. He prayed them, in the name of his lord, that since they were come into his land they would do him so much honour as to turn aside unto his dwelling, for they were on the right road, and 'twas nigh at hand.

Sir Gawain made answer, "I thank ye right heartily, ye and your lord, know that we will gladly come unto your dwelling an' we be not forbidden by sword-thrust." The squire spake again, "This will I tell ye surely, follow ye this road straight unto the Burg, 'tis here full nigh at hand; I, having shown ye the road, will hasten thither, and

ride ye as softly as ye will." With that he turned him again, and had swiftly out-riden them.

Know ye that the knights were not over-long upon the road, for the twain, Sir Lancelot and Sir Calogreant, were sore a-hungred; sudden they saw before them a castle, fair to look upon, and they deemed they should find a goodly lodging therein. Without, on a meadow, was a great company of knights, who vied with each other in skilful horsemanship, as knights are wont to do. Without spear or shield, in courteous wise they rode hither and thither on the open field; but when the three had come so near that they took knowledge of them, that noble folk left their sport, and rode swift as flight over the meadow toward the road, and received the guests with gentle greeting, as is love's custom, bidding them welcome to their lord's land. With that they took them in safe-conduct, and led them even to the castle—I wot Sir Gawain there found gladsome gain!

The Burg was fairly builded, and therein dwelt a great folk, knights and ladies, who were right joyful as was fitting, that did Sir Gawain mark right well, and drew



comfort therefrom. So well did they receive him that it grieved him naught that he was come unto their company; they beheld him right gladly, and all that was needful to him they gave him with full hand. So went he with the twain, Sir Lancelot and Sir Calogreant, unto the lord of the castle, even as they showed him the road.

'Twas the fairest palace ever builded, an the tale lie not no richer might tongue of man describe, or heart of man conceive. Never might the host be vexed through poverty, a courteous prince he was and good, and wise withal I ween. For the summer's heat his hall was all bestrewn with roses, whereof the perfume rejoiced him greatly. White was his vesture, cunningly wrought and sewn with diaper work of gold, 'twas a skilful hand that wrought it! Before him sat two youths of noble birth, whom he ever kept in his company; they jested lightly, the one with the other, the while they played at chess before his couch, and the lord leaned him over towards the board, for it gladdened him to behold the game, and to hearken to their jesting.

When Sir Gawain entered the hall the host received him and his two comrades well, and bade them be seated ; Sir Gawain he made to sit beside him on the couch, on a cushion of rose-coloured silk did they sit together. In sooth there was pleasure enow of question and answer, and of knightly talk betwixt the host and Sir Gawain ; and they who sat at the chess-board jested and made merry. Thus they made pastime till nightfall, and then were the tables set that all might eat, nor was any man forgotten, there was space for all.

Then the knights arose, and Sir Gawain also, but the host spake to them all by name, for right well he knew them, and bade them sit by him, which they were nothing loth to do. With that there came a great company of knights and ladies, who saluted the host, as is the fashion of women, and sat them all down. Long was the hall and wide, yet 'twas full in every part, and all the tables filled. After them came full twenty chamberlains, young men of noble birth and courteous bearing, who bare napkins and basins, that did the knights mark well ; behind them were a great company,

bearing candles and candlesticks without number, with that was the hall so light 'twere hard to tell whether 'twere day or night. And there followed thirty minstrels, and others who sang full many a tuneful melody, all with one accord rejoiced and sang praises.

The two knights and Sir Gawain sat beside their host, yet not on a level, for Sir Gawain sat above, and they below, and the host 'twixt the three. The others sat all around the hall, and ate each twain together, a knight with his lady.

And when all were seated, and were fain to eat, then there came into the hall a wondrous fair youth, of noble bearing, and in his hand he held a sword, fair and broad, and laid it down before the host. With that Sir Gawain 'gan to bethink him what this might betoken. After the youth came cupbearers, who passed through the hall, serving wine to all who were seated ere they might eat. Sir Gawain and his comrades did they serve first of all, the while the host sat beside them and did neither eat nor drink. Nor would Sir Gawain drink, but for his comrades twain they were so sore vexed by thirst, that even though he

bade them refrain yet must they drink withal, and thereafter did they fall into a deep slumber, and when Sir Gawain beheld this it vexed him sorely.

Oft-times did the lord of the castle pray Sir Gawain to drink, as a courteous host doth his guest, but otherwise was he minded, and well on his guard, lest he too fall asleep.

At the last came in fair procession, as it were, four seneschals, and as the last passed the door was the palace filled—nor were it fitting that I say more. In the sight of all there paced into the hall two maidens fair and graceful, bearing two candlesticks; behind each maid there came a youth, and the twain held between them a sharp spear. After these came other two maidens, fair in form and richly clad, who bare a salver of gold and precious stones, upon a silken cloth; and behind them, treading soft and slow, paced the fairest being whom since the world began God had wrought in woman's wise, perfect was she in form and feature, and richly clad withal. Before her she held on a rich cloth of samite a jewel wrought of red gold, in form of a base, whereon there stood another, of gold and gems, fashioned even as a reliquary that

standeth upon an altar. This maiden bare upon her head a crown of gold, and behind her came another, wondrous fair, who wept and made lament, but the others spake never a word, only drew nigh unto the host, and bowed them low before him.

Sir Gawain might scarce trust his senses, for of a truth he knew the crowned maiden well, and that 'twas she who aforetime had spoken to him of the Grail, and bade him an he ever saw her again, with five maidens in her company, to fail not to ask what they did there—and thereof had he great desire.

As he mused thereon the four who bare spear and salver, the youths with the maidens, drew nigh and laid the spear upon the table, and the salver beneath it. Then before Sir Gawain's eyes there befell a great marvel, for the spear shed three great drops of blood into the salver that was beneath, and the old man, the host, took them straightway. Therewith came the maiden of whom I spake, and took the place of the other twain, and set the fair reliquary upon the table—that did Sir Gawain mark right well—he saw therein a bread, whereof the old man brake the third part, and ate.

With that might Sir Gawain no longer

contain himself, but spake, saying, "Mine host, I pray ye for the sake of God, and by His Majesty, that ye tell me what meaneth this great company, and these marvels I behold?" And even as he spake all the folk, knights and ladies alike, who sat there, sprang from their seats with a great cry, and the sound as of great rejoicing. Straightway the host bade them again be seated as before, and make no sound until he bade, and this they did forthwith.

At the sound of the great cry the twain, Sir Lancelot and Sir Calogreant, wakened, for through the wine they had drunk they slept soundly, but even as they beheld the maidens who stood around the board, and the marvels that had chanced, they sank back into slumber, and so it was that for five hours sleep kept fast hold of them, the while the old man spake thus:

"Sir Gawain, this marvel which is of God may not be known unto all, but shall be held secret, yet since ye have asked thereof, sweet kinsman and dear guest, I may not withhold the truth. 'Tis the Grail which ye now behold. Herein have ye won the world's praise, for manhood and courage alike have ye right well shown, in

that ye have achieved this toilsome quest. Of the Grail may I say no more save that ye have seen it, and that great gladness hath come of this your question. For now are many set free from the sorrow they long had borne, and small hope had they of deliverance. Great confidence and trust had we all in Perceval, that he would learn the secret things of the Grail, yet hence did he depart even as a coward who ventured naught, and asked naught. Thus did his quest miscarry, and he learned not that which of a surety he should have learned. So had he freed many a mother's son from sore travail, who live, and yet are dead. Through the strife of kinsmen did this woe befall, when one brother smote the other for his land : and for that treason was the wrath of God shown on him and on all his kin, that all were alike lost.

“That was a woeful chance, for the living they were driven out, but the dead must abide in the semblance of life, and suffer bitter woe withal. That must ye know—yet had they hope and comfort in God and His grace, that they should come even to the goal of their grief, in such fashion as I shall tell ye.

“Should there be a man of their race who should end this their sorrow, in that he should demand the truth of these marvels, that were the goal of their desire ; so would their penance be fulfilled, and they should again enter into joy : alike they who lay dead and they who live, and now give thanks to God and to ye, for by ye are they now released. This spear and this food they nourish me and none other, for in that I was guiltless of the deed God condemned me not. Dead I am, though I bear not the semblance of death, and this my folk is dead with me. However that may be, yet though all knowledge be not ours, yet have we riches in plenty, and know no lack. But these maidens they be not dead, nor have they other penance save that they be even where I am. And this is by the command of God, that by this His mystery, which ye have here beheld, they shall nourish me once, and once alone, in the year. And know of a truth that the adventures ye have seen came of the Grail, and now is the penance perfected, and for ever done away, and your quest hath found its ending.”

Therewith he gave him the sword, and



told him he were right well armed therewith, and however much he might bear it in strife never would it break, and he bade him wear it all his days. Thus did he end his tale, telling no more, save that he might now leave the quest he had undertaken, and that for the rest, on the morrow should his toil be ended. And in so far as concerned the maidens 'twas through their unstained purity, and through no misdoing, that God had thus laid on them the service of the Grail; but now was their task ended, and they were sad at heart, for they knew well that never more should the Grail be so openly beheld of men, since that Sir Gawain had learned its secrets, for 'twas of the grace of God alone that mortal eyes might behold it, and its mysteries henceforth no tongue might tell.

With this speaking the night had passed, and the day began to dawn, and as his tale was done, lo! from before Sir Gawain's eyes the old man vanished, and with him the Grail, and all that goodly company, so that in the hall there abode none save the three knights and the maidens.

And Sir Gawain was somewhat sorry, when he saw his host no more, yet was he

glad when the maiden spake, saying that his labour was now at an end, and he had in sooth done all that pertained unto the Quest of the Grail, for never elsewhere in any land, save in that Burg alone, might the Grail have been beheld. Yet had that land been waste, but God had hearkened to their prayer, and by his coming had folk and land alike been delivered, and for that were they joyful.

That day Sir Gawain abode there with his comrades, who rejoiced greatly when they heard the tale, and yet were sorrowful in that they had slumbered when the Grail passed before them, and so beheld it not. Good hostelry they found in that Burg, and when the morning dawned and they must needs depart then was many a blessing called down upon Sir Gawain by those maidens, that he might live many years in bliss and honour, this they prayed of a true heart, since he had set them free, and one blessing surely seeketh another. So the good knight departed from among them. Thus doth the Quest of Sir Gawain find an ending.

### III. Castle Corbenic





Now the tale telleth how it chanced on a day that Sir Gawain had departed from Sir Hector, with whom he had some time held company, and rode on his way alone through a forest, till that it drew nigh to nones. Then he saw on his right hand where a pavilion was set up nigh to the brink of a fountain; thither did he turn himself to know if any were within. And when he came to the entry he beheld knights, to the number of six, who sat at meat on the green grass. Sir Gawain had eaten naught through the day, so he made fast his steed to one tree, and hung his shield on another, and entered within the pavilion, and saluted those who sat at meat; yet not one of them answered him a word, but all looked upon him with evil looks.

When Sir Gawain saw that none would speak unto him he was in no wise daunted, but sat him down beside them with his sword yet girt about him, and did off his helmet from his head, and set it nigh at hand, and began to eat right heartily, as

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one sore hungered, saying to him that sat beside him, "Eat, fair Sir, and be of good cheer!"

"In the Name of God, Sir knight," quoth the other, "good cheer may I not have of my meat, an ye thus prevent me, for perchance I have as great need of food as ye! Therefore I forbid ye to lay hand thereto, for by my head ye shall pay full dearly for it!" And all the others spake saying an Sir Gawain made not haste to depart they would slay him without more ado. And Sir Gawain said he would not budge for the six of them—"But it grieveth me for my steed, for he hath naught to eat!"

Then all who were within sprang to their feet, and laid hands on swords and axes, of which there were enow in the tent, and ran upon him to slay him. When Sir Gawain saw that he laced his helm and took again his shield, and refused none who came against him, but smote the first, who was unarmed, so hardly that he clave his head in twain, and he fell dead. Then he ran upon the others who would do their best to slay him, and smote the one so that he severed his arm, 'twixt neck and shoul-

der, and the others turned to flight when they saw their comrades in such evil case.

Sir Gawaine deigned not to pursue them, but mounted his steed, and rode on his way, and held it even till vespertide. And with that he came into a great valley, and he looked before him and saw at the far end thereof a castle that stood right well, for water ran all around it and it was circled with stout walls and battlements. The good knight turned his horse toward it, for there would he lie that night, and when he came to the water he found a bridge of wood by which one might come unto the castle.

So he came unto the chief street, and rode even toward the master-tower, and as he drew nigh he praised it much, for of its size 'twas the fairest and the richest and the strongest he had yet beheld. He looked on the right hand, and he bethought him that he heard a woman cry out, nigh unto him, and he turned him to that side whence he heard the cry, and came unto a great hall. And when he entered therein he saw a damsel in a marble bath, who cried aloud: "Holy Mary! Who will lift me out?"

Sir Gawain came thither, and saw that

the bath was half full of water, so that the damsel sat therein up to the waist. And when she saw him she cried, "For God's sake, Sir knight, lift me out!" And Sir Gawain set his hands on her two sides, but for all the power he put forth he might in no wise move her, though he made trial twice or thrice.

And when she saw that he might not move her she said, "Ha, Sir knight, ye have failed; now may ye know of a surety that ye shall not depart from this castle unshamed!"

"Damsel," saith he, "if I have not delivered ye I am right heavy at heart. Yet in that I have thereto set all my strength no man should blame me. But now would I pray ye of your friendship tell me wherefore ye be thus, and by what chance, and if ye may in no wise be delivered?"

"By my faith," said she, "I am set here in such wise that I endure sore torment and anguish, nor may I be delivered ere the best knight in the world shall lift me out, nor may I tell to ye or to another wherefore I be thus tormented until his coming, yet is that nigh at hand, for it shall be even in this very year."



“And how may it be,” saith he, “that ye suffer torment?”

“How?” saith she. “Put ye your hand in the water, and ye shall know.” With that Sir Gawain put his hand therein, but he might scarce draw it back swiftly enough, for ’twas so hot he deemed he had done his hand a lasting mischief.

“Sir knight,” said she, “now ye know well the anguish that I suffer.”

“Certes, damsel,” quoth he, “I see not how ye may long endure.”

“Wherefore?” saith she.

“Because,” saith he, “ye suffer too much anguish and torment.”

“’Tis not the will of God,” saith she, “that I shall die, for as yet hath He not taken full vengeance of a sin which I wrought, for the which I suffer this penance. But now may ye go hence, when it please ye, for naught may ye do to aid me. And since ye have failed in this matter ye may know no more.”

When Sir Gawain saw he might do no more he went his way to the master-palace. And squires more than twenty sprang to meet him, and aided him to dismount, and stabled his steed. Then they

led him up into the palace to disarm him, and there Sir Gawain found a great company of the fairest knights he had beheld in any land, who arose to greet him when they were ware of his coming. And they said that he was welcome among them, and he saluted them, and prayed might God bless them.

With that they made him unarm, and gave him a rich robe for vesture, and set him down among them, and asked him whence he came. And he said from the kingdom of Logres, and the house of King Arthur.

Then they made the greatest joy in the world, and asked of him news of the court, and he told them such as he knew, but 'twas a while since he had heard aught.

As he spoke there came forth from a chamber a knight, who led with him many other knights ; and he was the fairest man that Sir Gawain had beheld since he left his own land, and had the semblance of one of noble birth. And when they who were within saw him coming they spake to Sir Gawain, saying, "Behold the King!"

With that Sir Gawain rose to his feet, and bade him welcome, and the other re-

turned his greeting with a right fair countenance and bade him sit beside him ; and he asked him who he was, and he told him the truth. Then was the King right joyful, for greatly did he desire to see Sir Gawain, and to have his friendship, so he spake to him and they took knowledge of each other.

While they spake thus Sir Gawain beheld, and saw where there entered through a window a white dove, which bare in its beak a censer of richest gold. And so soon as it came therein the palace was filled with the sweetest odours that heart of man might conceive, or tongue of man might tell. And all that were in the hall became mute, and spake never a word more, but kneeled down as soon as they beheld the dove. And it entered straightway into a chamber, and forthwith the folk of the palace made ready with all haste, and set the tables on the dais, and they sat them down the one and the other, and never a man of them spake a word, nor had need of summons. Sir Gawain marvelled greatly at this adventure, but he sat him down with the others, and beheld and saw how they were all in prayers and orisons.

With that there came forth from the

chamber wherein the dove had entered a damsel, the fairest he had beheld any day of his life ; and without fail was she the fairest maiden then alive, nor was her peer thereafter born. Her hair was cunningly plaited and bound, and her face was fair to look upon. She was beautiful with all the beauty that pertaineth unto a woman, none fairer was ever seen on earth. She came forth from the chamber bearing in her hands the richest vessel that might be beheld by the eye of mortal man. 'Twas made in the semblance of a chalice, and she held it on high above her head, so that she ever bowed before it.

Sir Gawain looked on the vessel, and praised it much, yet might he not know whereof 'twas wrought ; for 'twas not of wood, nor of any manner of metal ; nor was it in any wise of stone, nor of horn, nor of bone, and therefore was he sore abashed. Then he looked on the maiden, and marvelled more at her beauty than at the wonder of the vessel, for never had he seen a damsel with whom she might be compared ; and he mused so fixedly upon her that he had no thought for aught beside. But for the King and his knights,

as the damsel passed them by, all kneeled low before the holy vessel ; and forthwith were the tables replenished with the choicest meats in the world, and the hall filled with sweetest odours.

When the damsel had passed the days once she returned into the chamber whence she came, and Sir Gawain followed her with his eyes as long as he might, and when he saw her no more he looked on the table before him, and saw naught that he might eat, for 'twas void and bare ; yet was there none other but had great plenty, yea a surfeit of victuals, before him. And when he saw this he was sore abashed, and knew not what he might say or do, since he deemed well that he had in some point transgressed, and for that transgression was his meat lacking to him. So he withheld him from asking till that they were risen from the table, but then all gat them forth from the palace, the one here, the other there, so that Sir Gawain wist not what had become of them, and knew naught but that he was left alone ; and when he himself would have gone forth into the courtyard below he might no longer do so, for all the doors were fast shut.

When he saw this he leaned him against one of the windows of the hall and fell into deep thought. Then there came forth from a chamber a dwarf, bearing a staff in his hand, and when he saw Sir Gawain he cried upon him: "Who be this caitiff knight, who by ill chance leaneth here against our window? Flee ye from hence, here may ye not remain, for in ye is too great villainy! Go, get ye to rest in one of these chambers that none behold ye here!" Then he raised his staff to smite Sir Gawain, but he put forth his hand and took it from him. And when the dwarf saw this he cried, "Ha! Sir knight, 'twill avail ye nothing, for ye may not escape hence without shaming!"

With that he gat him into a chamber; and Sir Gawain looked toward the head of the hall, and saw there one of the richest couches in the world, and he made haste towards it, for there would he lie. But even as he set him down he heard a maiden cry upon him, "Ha! Sir knight, thou diest an thou liest there unarmed, for 'tis the Couch Adventurous, but look ye, yonder lie arms, take them, and lie ye down an ye will."

Sir Gawain ran swiftly where he saw the armour, and armed himself as best he might, and when he was armed he sat him down straightway. But scarce had he set him down when he heard a cry, the most fell he had ever heard, and he thought him well 'twas the voice of the foul fiend. With that there came forth swiftly from a chamber a lance whereof the blade was all afire, and it smote Sir Gawain so hardly that despite shield and hauberk it pierced his shoulder through and through. And he fell swooning, but anon he felt how one drew out the lance, yet he saw not who laid hand to it. Then was he much afeard, for the wound bled sorely, yet would he not rise up from the couch, but said within himself that though he died for it yet would he behold more of the marvels—yet he wist well that he was sore wounded.

Long time did Sir Gawain abide there, and when night fell—so that he saw but ill save for the light of the moon, which shone through more than forty windows, which were all open—then he looked towards the chamber which was nighest to him and beheld a dragon, the greatest he had ever seen, never a man but had felt

dread at the sight. In all the world were there no more diverse colours than might be seen upon it, for 'twas red, and blue, and yellow, and green, and black, and white : and its eyes were red and swollen, and its mouth huge and gaping.

The dragon began to go up and down in the chamber, making play with its tail, and lashing the ground : and when it had thus made sport awhile it turned over on its back, and began to writhe and utter cries, even as it died a hard death. When it had striven thus awhile it stretched itself out as it were indeed dead, and Sir Gawain marvelled much, for he saw how that it cast forth from its mouth young dragons, even to the number of five hundred, all of which were living.

When it had done this it came forth even unto the great hall, and lo ! it found there a leopard, the greatest in the world, and the twain ran the one upon the other, and a mighty battle began betwixt them. And the dragon deemed well it would get the better of the leopard, yet might it not do so. And as they fought thus it befell Sir Gawain that he lost his sight, and for awhile saw naught—yet did the moon shine



brightly—but after awhile his sight returned to him, and he saw how the dragon and the leopard ever strove together.

Long while did the strife of the twain endure, so that Sir Gawain wist not the which had the better, and the which the worse; but when the dragon saw that it might not vanquish the leopard, it turned again to the chamber whence it came, and so soon as it entered therein, the young dragons fell upon it, and they fought together right hardily, and the *mêlée* endured great part of the night, till that in the end the old dragon slew the young, and the young the old.

Then the windows of the hall clapt to, the one after the other, with so great a noise it seemed as if the palace must fall; and there came therein a wind, so great and so strong that it swept clear the rushes from the floor. At this adventure did Sir Gawain marvel much, more than at aught that had aforetime befallen, yet would he wait awhile to see what should chance further.

Long time after that the windows of the palace were closed Sir Gawain hearkened and heard the sound of bitter weeping and lamentation, he deemed well 'twas the voice

of women. And when he would have arisen to seek the cause he saw come forth from a chamber twelve maidens, who made the greatest lamentation in the world; they came the one after the other and said, weeping, "Dear Lord God, when shall we be delivered from this pain?" And when they came unto the door of the chamber where the dove had entered the even before, they kneeled them down and made prayers and orisons, and withal wept bitterly. And when they had been there a great while they turned them again whence they came.

When the maidens were departed Sir Gawain saw come forth from a chamber a great knight, all armed, shield at neck, and sword in hand; and he said unto Sir Gawain, "Sir knight, arise, go slumber in one of these chambers, for here may ye not remain!" But he said he would abide there an he died for it.

"Not so, fair Sir," quoth the other, "for it behoves ye to fight with me ere ye may abide here!"

"To fight," quoth Sir Gawain, "will I assent, an I must needs suffer it, nevertheless I were liever to fight than to get me hence!"

"I' faith," quoth the knight, "an ye will not do it of courtesy ye must needs do it of force—guard ye well, for here I do defy ye!"

Then he ran on him with uplifted sword, and Sir Gawain arose and defended him as best he might, but the knight pressed him hard. So their shields and helmets were cloven, and their hauberks rent on shoulder and on side and on thigh, and the blood ran from their bodies. But greatly was Sir Gawain vexed for the wound in his shoulder, for it might not be stanchèd, and that wound had well nigh put him to the worse; yet he suffered and endured as best he might, and covered him with his shield as one who knew well what it behoved him to do. And the knight pressed upon him with sword thrust, as one of great valour and prowess, and drave him hither and thither.

Thus Sir Gawain endured even until he had taken breath, then he ran vigorously upon the knight, and dealt him many a hardy blow on helmet and shield, and the knight did likewise. And the battle endured long, till the one and the other had lost their force, and the strength of their

bodies, and were so mazed they might no longer hold their feet, but fell to the ground, the one on the one side, the other on the other. And they had fought so long and so hardily that the hall was bestrewn with the mails of their hauberks, and the splinters of their shields. And so spent and so weary were they that they might not lift their heads, but lay on the ground even as they had swooned.

Great while they lay thus, Sir Gawain beside the couch and the knight anear him, then the palace began to shake, and the windows to clap together, and it began to thunder and lighten, as 'twas the worst weather in the world, save that it rained not. Of this adventure was Sir Gawain much dismayed, yet so spent was he that he might not lift his head, and with that was his brain so bemused with the thunder claps that he knew not if it were day or night.

Then there swept through the hall a breeze so soft and sweet, 'twas a marvel, and there came the sound of many voices as it were descending into the hall, which sang so sweetly that naught in the world could liken them, there might well be even

two hundred. And Sir Gawain might not hear what they sang, save they oft-times chanted, "Glory, and praise, and honour be unto the King of Heaven!" And a little afore they heard the voices 'twas as if the sweetest perfumes in the world were shed forth therein.

Sir Gawain hearkened well the voices, and they seemed to him so sweet and so pleasant that he deemed not they were of earth, but rather things spiritual, and without doubt 'twas even so. Then he opened his eyes and saw naught, and he knew verily that these were no earthly voices, since his eyes might not behold them. He was fain to have arisen from the ground, yet might not do so since he had lost the strength of his limbs and the power of his body.

Then he saw come forth from a chamber the damsel who the even afore had borne the holy vessel before the table. And before her came two tapers and two censers. And when she came even to the middle of the palace she set the Holy Grail afore her on a table of silver. And Sir Gawain beheld all around censers to the number of ten which ceased not to give forth perfume. And all

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the voices began to sing together more sweetly than heart of man might think, or mouth speak. And all said with one voice, "Blessed be the Father of Heaven."

When the song had endured long time the damsel took the vessel and bare it into the chamber whence she came, and then were the voices silent as they had departed thence, and all the windows of the palace opened and closed them again and the hall grew dark so that Sir Gawain saw naught, but of this was he well aware that he felt hale and whole as naught had ailed him, nor might he feel aught of the wound in his shoulder, for 'twas right well healed. Then he arose joyous and glad at heart, and went seeking the knight who had fought with him, but he found him not.

Then he heard as it were a great folk that drew nigh to him, and he felt how they laid hold on him by the arms and the shoulders, and the feet and the head, and bare him forth from the hall, and bound him fast to a cart that was in the midst of the court, and forthwith he fell asleep.

In the morning when the sun was risen Sir Gawain awoke, and lo! he was in the vilest cart in the world, and he saw that his

shield was bound on the shaft afore him, and his steed was made fast behind. But in the shafts was a horse so thin and so meagre to look at that it seemed scarce worth twopence. And when he found himself in such sorry case he made sore lament ; for it seemed to him that no man was ever so sorely shamed, and he were liever he were dead than living.

With that came towards him a damsel, bearing a scourge in her hand, and she began to smite the steed and to lead it swiftly through the streets of the town. And when the minstrels saw the knight in the cart they followed shouting and crying, and they threw on him mud, and dirt and old clouted rags in great plenty. Thus they followed him forth from the town, pelting him with all the dirt they might find.

And when he had passed the bridge the damsel stayed, and unbound him, and bade him descend from the cart, for there had he been over long. And he sprang down forthwith and mounted his steed and asked of the damsel the name of the castle, and she said 'twas the castle of Corbenic. And he went his way, making bitter lamentation, and cursing the hour he was born and

that he was made knight. For now had he lived over long, since that he had been held the vilest and the most shamed among men.

So Sir Gawain went his way, making lament and weeping right bitterly. Thus he wandered all day without meat or drink till at even he came to a hermitage, where dwelt one whom men called the Secret Hermit, and 'twas even as he was about to chant vespers. Sir Gawain hearkened right willingly; and when they were done the holy man entered his cell and asked of Sir Gawain who he might be, and Sir Gawain told him the truth.

“Ha! Sir knight, ye be right welcome. Certes of all the knights in the world ye be the knight I most desired to see; but tell me, for God's sake, where did ye lie overnight?”

Sir Gawain was that wrathful he might not speak, but the tears came even to his eyes; and the holy man saw well that some matter had vexed him, so that he left speaking, save that he said: “Sir, be not vexed at aught that hath befallen ye, for there liveth no man so valiant but mischance o'ertaketh him at times.”



“Certes, Sir,” quoth Sir Gawain, “I know right well that there be none so valiant but he findeth ill-luck now and again, yet never to my thinking did one man alone have such ill-hap as hath fallen to me this fortnight past.” Then he began to tell him all that had befallen him at the castle of Corbenic, and the holy man looked on him, and became sore amazed, so that for awhile he spake no word ; and when he might speak he said, “Ha, Sir, God help ye, for truly ’twas great mischance when ye saw, and yet wist not what ye saw !”

“Ha, fair Sir,” quoth Sir Gawain, “an ye know what ’twas that I beheld tell me, I pray ye !”

“Certes,” quoth the Hermit, “’twas the Holy Grail, in the which the blood of Our Lord was received and held, and when ye beheld it not in humility and lowliness ye merited right well punishment, and so were ye forbidden to partake of its Bread, and that saw ye right well, for when all the others were served ye were passed over.”

“For God’s sake, Sir,” quoth Sir Gawain, “tell me the truth of the marvels I beheld.”

“Through me,” quoth the Hermit,

“may ye not know them, yet shall it be but a short while ere ye shall learn.”

“Ha, fair Sir,” saith the knight, “tell me at least the signification of the dragon, an ye know.”

“That will I tell ye,” quoth the Hermit, “but after shall ye ask me no more, for no more may ye hear as at this time.

“Verily did ye see in the chamber a dragon, which cast forth from its mouth fire and flame and young dragons, which it left even in the chamber, and went forth and entered into the great hall. And when it came thither it found a leopard, against which it battled mightily, but might not overcome it. And when it saw it might not have the victory it returned back into the chamber whence it came forth, and there did the young dragons fall upon it, and they slew each the other—and that did ye behold.”

“Yea, ’twas even so,” quoth Sir Gawain.

“Now will I tell ye,” quoth the holy man, “the signification thereof. The mighty and great dragon figureth the King Arthur, your uncle, who shall depart from his land, even as the dragon departed from the chamber, leaving therein his knights and

kinsmen, even as the dragon left its young. And like as the dragon fought against the leopard, yet might not overcome, so shall King Arthur make war upon a knight, but shall not vanquish him, though he strive with all his power. And like as the dragon returned to his lair when it might not put the leopard to the worse, even so shall the King get him back to his own land when he seeth that he may in no wise get the better of that knight. And then shall a marvellous adventure befall ye, for even as ye lost your sight, the while that the dragon and the leopard strove together, so shall the light of your prowess be put out. But when the King shall return to his land it shall chance unto him as it chanced unto the dragon, for his own men shall fall upon him, even as the young fell upon the old dragon, and the conflict shall endure till all shall alike be slain.

“Now have ye heard the signification of the dragon, so have I done your behest, even as I will ye shall do mine, when that I shall ask ye.”

And Sir Gawain said even so would he do.

“Now,” quoth the holy man, “it be-

hoveth ye to swear upon these relics that never in your life will ye speak of that which ye have seen, or tell it unto man or woman." And he sware, yet in his heart was he sore dismayed for the words that he had heard, yet did he make good cheer, though his heart misgave him.

That night he lay within, and was well served of all that the holy man might have, and the morrow, so soon as he had heard Mass from the lips of the Hermit, he armed himself, and mounted his steed, and commended the holy man to God, and went his way as before. But now doth the tale cease speaking of Sir Gawain, and telleth awhile of Hector, who had set himself to search for Sir Lancelot.

## Notes

PAGE 10.—*Yet many put the blame on Kay.* In a later section of the poem, that added by Manessier, a kinswoman of the slain knight tells Gawain that she knows *par astronomie* that Kay was the murderer, and the latter is in consequence challenged by Gawain and defeated in single combat. MS. 12,577, a fourteenth-century MS., representing a later version, states definitely at the moment of the catastrophe that Kay is the slayer. I suspect, however, that in the earliest form of the story the knight was really slain by supernatural agency, probably as a punishment for turning back upon his quest. The tale should be compared with the story of Balaain and Balaan, in Malory, Book II.; there we find the king in a pavilion pitched by a meadow, the passing knight who refuses to return, but does so under Balaain's safe-conduct, and is slain by a mysterious knight who rides invisible. I think that there can be little doubt that the same original lies at the root of both tales, but both alike have suffered contamination and are far from clear and coherent.

PAGE 14.—*Lo, a hand black and hideous.* The incident of the Demon Hand has recently been discussed by Professor Kittredge in his valuable monograph on the were-wolf story of *Arthur and Gorlagon*; in the tales belonging to this were-wolf group the hand is that of a magician, who steals on the same night a child from its cradle and a foal from the stable. A curious point which seems to show contamination with this form of

the story is that in MS. 794 of the *Perceval* the Black Hand of the chapel adventure holds a bridle, manifestly unnecessary for extinguishing a candle! It will be remembered that in the *Queste* Sir Gawain and Sir Hector behold the vision of a mysterious hand holding a bridle and a lighted candle, which enters a chapel and vanishes (*cf.* Malory, Book XVI.). Here, of course, an edifying interpretation is given to the vision. It seems probable that alike in our story, in the were-wolf tales, and in the *Queste* we have traces of the same Folk-lore original, though whether the horse-stealing or chapel-haunting Demon be nearer the common prototype it is now impossible to say. In Manessier's continuation we read how Perceval, after a sharp tussle with the Foul Fiend, who appears in bodily form, rids the chapel of the enchantment. In the account given of his visit we find a dead knight lying on the altar, and a hermit relates how the Black Hand has slain over 3000 victims, a knight being strangled there daily since a curse fell upon the chapel through the sin of one who slew his mother. This incident of the Demon Hand would clearly repay further investigation.

PAGE 16.—*The torment of the sea, which dashed against the pathway.* From other versions of the story it is clear that we must imagine the castle as standing on a promontory jutting far out into the sea, and approached by a causeway, exposed on either side to the waves. This, it will be remembered, is much the same position as that assigned to Corbenic in the *Queste*, while the *Prose Lancelot*, as we shall see, places the Grail castle inland.

PAGE 18.—*He beheld a bier.* This bier, and the identity of the body upon it, are distinctly mysterious features of the story, and no satisfactory explanation can be suggested. Who the dead man is we are never told; it seems evident that the task Sir Gawain had undertaken was in reality that of avenger. Manessier, who, as we have seen, offers an unsatisfactory conclusion to the introductory episode, ignores this, and nowhere, so far as I know, is the incident explained, or even alluded to. In the story of Balain, to which I

have referred above, it will be remembered that in his fight with King Pellas he runs from room to room, seeking a weapon, till he reaches a chamber, wherein is a bed, richly dight, and one lying thereon; beside the bed, on a golden table, is the spear wherewith he smites the Dolorous Stroke. We have here, again, a parallel to our story, but, as before, a parallel differing so widely in detail that it is impossible to say what the relation between the two may be.

PAGE 21.—*'Twas the rich Grail served them.* The conception of the Grail, as immediate and active Food-provider, is, so far as I know, peculiar to this version. We find elsewhere that after the Grail has passed through the hall all present are supplied with any food they may desire; this is brought about in some mysterious manner by the agency of the sacred relic—a very different thing from the direct service here described. The question that must occur to any reader of this story is, What did the writer of this version really understand by the Grail? In the MSS. 794 and 12,577 the king, after explaining the meaning of the Lauce, goes on to tell of the Grail: it is the vessel in which Joseph of Arimathea received the blood which flowed from the wounds of Christ. Now it is clear that this is an interpolation, as the point of the story is that Gawain does *not* learn the meaning of the Grail. The version given in our text is incomparably the clearest, most detailed, and most coherent we possess. Can we feel sure that the Grail, as known to the original writer of the tale, was the same as the Grail known to the later copyists? I subjoin the versions of the two MSS. referred to; it will be seen that the independent action of the Grail is considerably modified:

*messire Gauvain lesgarda  
e durement san merveilla  
del graal q'si les servoit  
nul autre seneschal ni voit  
ne nul sergent ne nul valet  
ne set q'oste ne q'met. (794, fo. 422.)*

In MS. 12,577 the parallel passage runs:

*mesire Gauvain esgarda  
 tout ce et moult se merveilla  
 du greal qui si le servoit  
 ne nul autre seriant navoit  
 si se merveille estrangement  
 nose mengier seurement. (fo. 134, vo.)*

Now compare this with the original of our text :

*mesire Gauvain lesgarda  
 trop durement se merveilla  
 de ce q'il servoit ensi  
 car ore est la e ore est chi  
 a trop grant merveille li tient  
 q'il va si tost e revient  
 devant les chevaliers servir. (12,576, fo. 90.)*

It will be seen that, especially in the first of these extracts, an attempt has been made to soften down the rôle ascribed to the Grail: in our story Gawain distinctly sees what happens, in 794 he does not behold the server. That they are ted by the Grail is clear, for the king tells Gawain he has seen his astonishment ; but 'tis no wonder, for

*bien an doit avoir le pooir  
 car cest icil graal pour voir  
 q'notre sires tant lama  
 q'il de son sanc lenora. (794, fo. 423.)*

Further, in the very MS. from which our story is drawn we have two other accounts of Gawain's visit to the Grail castle, one given by himself to his son, and clearly referring to the adventure in our text, the other, occurring at an earlier point of the recital, being apparently an attempt to harmonise the same account with the version given by Chrétien. I shall return to these later ; for the moment, the point to which I desire to draw attention is that in both the presentment of the Grail is in harmony with that found elsewhere—it is carried in procession by a fair maiden. The lesson of these manifestly conflicting versions appears to me to be this: in our story, as it stands, we have the survival of an early form



of the Quest, in which the Grail was distinctly a non-Christian, food-producing talisman; the writer of 12,576 always refers to it as the *rich*, not the *holy*, Grail. But when Gautier compiled his continuation the story was already a survival, and another version had practically superseded it; the old tale was left intact in its main outlines, but explanations were interpolated and references modified, in accordance with the later version, the result being curiously incongruous. It is the existence of such a version as this, with its markedly Folk-lore and marvellous features, and the clearly interpolated character of the Christian element, that renders it impossible for me to accept the theory of a purely Christian Grail advanced by Professor Wesselovsky and other learned writers on the subject.

PAGE 21.—*He beheld there a lance.* The exceedingly barbaric character of this lance, from which streams of blood, not drops as in the other versions, flow continually and run through a special channel out of the hall, seems to conflict seriously with the legendary Christian character assigned to it. Nor do I think that the theory of a Christian origin can here be maintained. Whatever may be held with regard to the Grail, it is certain that neither heterodox Ritual, spurious Gospel, nor Paradise myth offer us a parallel to its companion talisman; yet not only is the lance found in all the early Quests, but it is often even more prominent than the Grail. I shall later have occasion to refer to the destructive powers assigned to it by Chrétien; here it will be sufficient to point out that even in so late a version as the prose *Lancelot* it is referred to as the "Spear of Vengeance." I have long been of opinion that not only did the Lance belong originally to the Grail quest, but that it was the first of the two talismans to undergo the Christianising process, though that process was only partial, and it retained to the end strong traces of its Pagan origin. Could we discover a legend in which a heathen god or hero was mortally wounded by a weapon which ceased not to bleed until he was avenged, we should, I think, have found the clue to the most perplexing elements of the Grail legend.

PAGE 23.—*Put ye now the two pieces together.* Here we have the first appearance of an incident which in the subsequent development of the story assumes considerable importance. It will be remembered that in the portion of the poem due to Chrétien there is no mention of a broken sword, which the achiever of the Grail quest must needs weld afresh, but in every one of the continuations, whether by Gautier, Gerbert, or Manessier, it is upon Perceval's fulfilment of this test that his final success is made to depend. Chrétien certainly knew something of a broken sword connected with the Grail, as he states that the sword presented to Perceval by the Fisher King will break in a certain peril, not specified. At this point MS. 12,577 has a curious reading; when the squire hands the weapon to the king we read:

*et il la bien demie traite  
si vit bien que ele estoit fraite. (fo. 19.)*

From the context evidently a misrendering of "*ou ele fu faite*" of the other MSS., an inscription being on the blade, but the copyist had evidently another sword in his mind. The point is, that in the face of the manifest desire of all the continuators to make their versions harmonise, not with that of Chrétien, whom they are ostensibly following, but with that of Gautier, can we possibly hold that the sword-test is an incident foreign to the Grail tradition? Is it not rather probable that it formed part of that tradition as popularly known, and that it was to this popular tradition rather than to conscious literary versions that Gautier turned for inspiration? It may not be out of place here to record that while in the MS. printed by M. Potvin, the only printed edition of the *Perceval* available, the sword breaks in the combat with l'Orgillos, immediately after Perceval quits the Grail castle; in one only of the six MSS. I have hitherto read is that breaking recorded.

PAGE 27.—*Ye shall have heard tell of the great destruction.* We have here again a parallel with the Balaain story, in that here as there the mysterious curse of Logres is brought about by the blow of a deadly weapon; but here the weapon in question is a sword,

there a lance. In Chrétien's section of the poem, however, when Gawain, at the instance of the King of Escavalon, departs to seek the bleeding lance, we are told :

*e sest escrit q'il ert une hore  
q'tox li roiaimes de logres  
q'iadis fu la terre as ogres  
sera destruis par cele lance. (12,576, fo. 25.)*

The *Queste*, on the other hand, connects the "Dolorous Stroke" with a sword. With our present scanty knowledge it is impossible to harmonise or explain these conflicting accounts; they are probably remains of a once popular and widespread tale which no longer exists in a coherent form. It may be noted that we have precisely the same confusion in the case of the Maimed King, whose wound is sometimes due to a sword-thrust, sometimes to a lance. It will be seen that in our text the king is not subject to any infirmity, nor do I think that he is identical with the Fisher King, as in some of the interpolated passages he refers to this latter as being of the race of Joseph of Arimathea, to which he says Perceval also belongs.

PAGE 27.—*He saw that Sir Gawain slept.* In Chrétien's section of the poem there is no trace of the mysterious slumber which hinders the Grail-seeker from achieving his quest, but, as we shall see, it occurs in our second version, and is also found in the *Perlesvaus*.

PAGE 29.—*All the folk whom he beheld blessed him.* We find here that the curse brought upon the land by the Dolorous Stroke can be removed by the asking of a certain question; this is also the case in our second story. In Chrétien, however, it appears from the speech of Perceval's cousin and the reproaches of the Grail messenger that the failure to ask the question will of itself entail misfortune to land and people; this is one of the many instances in which Chrétien and his continuators seem to have followed divergent traditions. The suggestion, long ago made by Mr. Nutt, that we have in the Grail Quest the combination of two independent themes, designated by him the "Feud" Quest

and the "Unspelling" Quest, appears to me to be still the most satisfactory explanation of the peculiar features of our story. The hypothesis of a Christian origin may account for the "Early History" versions, but it absolutely fails to explain the "machinery" of the Quest, which is fundamentally and persistently non-Christian, and of marked Folk-lore character.

I subjoin a summary of the two accounts of the visit to the Grail castle, referred to above\* : the first has manifestly been altered to correspond with Chrétien's poem ; we have the maimed king, a fair youth, bearing a bleeding lance, maiden with "taillor d'argent," two youths with lighted candles, and a weeping maiden bearing aloft the "holy" Grail. These are followed by four "serjants" carrying a bier, on which lies a dead body and a broken sword. Gawain asks concerning these marvels, and is told he shall know if worthy. The host sends for the sword, "and know that his niece had for love sent it him," bidding Gawain re-solder it. He fails, and is told he has not yet done enough to learn what he asks. Gawain falls asleep, his head on the table, and awakes in the morning in a "marais." This appears to be our story *plus* Chrétien.

The second version, as related by Gawain to his son, agrees much more closely with our tale. He explains that he cannot return to Court till he has learnt the truth of the knight slain before the Queen's tent, and again found the Grail castle. He then tells how he came to a hall wherein was no living soul, but a dead body on a bier. Suddenly there was a great light, and the hall was filled with folk who made bitter lamentation, but spake no word to him, and vanished even as they came. A knight and three "serjants" came forth from a chamber, greeted him kindly, took charge of his horse and armour, and led him to the king, who received him well and invited him to eat with him. A youth appeared bearing a lance, from the point of which hung a drop of blood, another with a broken sword, which the king handed to Gawain, bidding him re-solder it. This he failed to do, and the king, shaking his head, told him he would not

\* See p. 76.

succeed in his quest, but would have shame. He also saw another thing (here the MS. suddenly alters, giving a passage read in two parallel columns, and written closely), a Grail:

*onques hom ne vit ital  
si le portoit une pucele  
q' mult ert avenans e bele  
par toute la table servoit  
et pain devant le roi metoit.* (Fo. 147.)

The King bade Gawain ask the meaning of anything he saw. He asked of the lance—'twas the lance of Longinus—but sleep overtook him and he asked no more. The next morning he awoke upon a rock by the seashore. Here, too, the divergence from our text is marked, but there can be no doubt that the adventure is the same. We can hardly, I think, be mistaken if we conclude that a story of which so many variants were current must have been both an old and a popular tale.

## II.

PAGE 32.—*It might be held for an earthly Paradise.* Here and there in the Grail stories we find curious hints of a connection with the popular "Paradise" myths of the Middle Ages. Thus in the *Parzival* the hero on his first visit to the Grail castle is regaled with fruits from Paradise, while in Gerbert's interesting, and unfortunately little known, continuation of the *Perceval*, it is in attempting to force an entrance to the terrestrial Paradise that the sword of the Grail castle is broken. Professor Hagen, in a recent study on the subject,\* has endeavoured to prove that the entire Grail legend is only a form of the mediæval Paradise myth; but while such features as these lend colour to his theory, the general character of the Quest, which is, as we have seen, decidedly non-Christian, is against it. The truth appears to be that the development of the story being

\* *Der Gral*, 1900.

due to the mingling of several originally independent streams of tradition, it is hopeless to seek for the origin in any one source.

PAGE 40.—*Thereafter did they fall into a deep slumber.* We have here a recurrence of the mysterious slumber noted before, and unknown to Chrétien.

PAGE 40.—*The fairest being wrought in woman's wise, another who wept and made lament.* The extreme beauty of the Grail-bearer is always insisted upon in the stories: the rôle of the weeping maiden is never clear; here, alone, is any explanation offered, and that does not appear quite satisfactory. In the notes to No. III., I shall have occasion to recur to the subject, as we shall see she is a persistent and mysterious feature of the story.

PAGE 43.—*Through the strife of kinsmen did this woe befall.* This allusion to a deadly strife between brothers again recalls the Balaan and Balaain story, which, as already noted, also contains the dead knight, the "Dolorous Stroke," and the Curse of Logres.

PAGE 44.—*Nourish me once, and once alone, in the year.* Here, in contradistinction to all the other versions, the talismanic properties of the Grail appear to be exercised on behalf of the king alone; indeed, the magical character has practically been superseded by the sacramental. At the same time the tale retains marked Folk-lore features, in the unspelling question, the Death-in-Life, and the final vanishing of king and courtiers.

PAGE 41.—*The spear shed three great drops of blood.* I give the original text of this passage, which has no parallel in any other Grail romance:

*do geschach ein michel wunder  
vor Gawaines ougen:  
daz sper von gotes tougen  
wart grozer tropfen bluotes drî  
in dem tobliere, der im bl  
stuont: die nam der alt dar abe. (P. 363.*

## III.

PAGE 55.—*A white dove.* The only other version which introduces a dove is that of the *Parsival*, where the virtue of the Grail is renewed every Good Friday by means of a Host, which is brought from Heaven by a dove. There the agency of the dove is intelligible, as a medium of communication between heaven and earth; here there seems no valid reason for its introduction. We cannot suppose that the Grail was hallowed by the censer; that would be entirely out of keeping with the character of the talisman as here represented. Probably both dove and censer are "properties" unintelligently borrowed from earlier forms. Thus the dove was in Kiot's poem (for that such a poem existed the publication of the curious *Saone de Nausay*\* places beyond doubt), where its rôle would be the same as that ascribed to it by Wolfram; the censer comes from our first story, where in Vigils for the Dead it is quite in place.

PAGE 56.—*'Twas not of wood, &c.* In no other version is this additional mystery hinted at; the vessel is generally of gold adorned with precious stones. I do not think there is any foundation for the statement of our text, but suspect it is only an attempt to heighten the marvellous character of the story.

PAGE 58.—*'Tis the Couch Adventurous.* The "Lit Merveil" is a common property of romance, and is found outside the Arthurian cycle; I suspect that here, however, it is borrowed from Gawain's adventure in the Châtel Merveil. Gawain and Bohort are the only two knights who brave the dangers of a night in the hall of the Grail castle, and when it comes to the turn of the latter the marvels which befall him, the showers of bolts and arrows from unseen foemen, and the onslaught of a famishing lion, are manifestly taken over from the *Perceval*.

PAGE 62.—*Maidens who made the greatest lamentation in the world.* Here we have again the weeping maiden of the two first stories, but this time in an accentuated

\* *Saone de Nausay*, ed. Goldschmidt Bibl. d. litt. Vereins. 1902.

form. Here there seems absolutely no reason for her presence; there is no dead knight to be mourned, no spell to be broken. The inhabitants of the Grail castle, so far from being in torment have all that heart can desire, and the special honour of being guardians of the sacred vessel. Hitherto critics appear to have overlooked this feature, and yet it occurs throughout in a curiously persistent manner. On the occasion of Bohort's first visit to Corbenic, when he does not brave the marvels of the Palace Adventurous, while the Grail passes as usual before them at meat, Elaine, the erstwhile Grail-bearer, weeps bitterly, and her father explains that 'tis because, having lost her virginity she has forfeited her right to the office. I think we must face the fact that in none of the versions now extant do we possess the visit to the Grail castle in its true and primitive form, but that each and all of these versions retain features, more or less modified, of the original tale. The "Weeping Maiden" is, I would suggest, such a feature, but the rôle she really played in the story has nowhere been preserved.\*

PAGE 66.—*Lo, he was in the vilest cart in the world.* The fact that it is only in the *Lancelot* that the unsuccessful quester is thus shamed renders it probable that this feature was borrowed from the *Charrette*. Lancelot, who is represented as the superior of Gawain, having undergone this ordeal, the latter must also submit to it, in an aggravated form. In the notes to *Libeaus Desconus* I have pointed out the resemblance between the punishment which awaits the defeated knights at l'Ile d'Or and the treatment here accorded to Gawain.

\* I am inclined to think that the general lamentation which alike in *Parvival* and *Peredur* follows on the appearance of the Lance, is a reminiscence of the mourning over the slain knight, on p. 20.













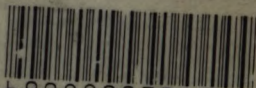
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